

# Press Release



## **“BE OUR GUEST” PROGRAM CONTINUES TO INSPIRE HIGH SCHOOLERS TO CHOOSE A CAREER IN HOSPITALITY WITH NEW SUPPORT FROM YORK REGION AND SIMCOE COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARDS**

TORONTO, ON, May 29, 2023 – Be Our Guest – a Toronto-based education program inspiring high school co-op students with unique hospitality training opportunities – is expanding through a new partnership with the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) and the Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB).

Designed by a group of Toronto’s leading hospitality experts in collaboration with local school boards, Be Our Guest launched in 2017 at George Brown College with the support of like-minded leaders, colleagues, and educators to create a unique co-op program for high school students that provides invaluable access into the exciting world of hospitality and tourism.

This year, Friday Harbour Resort along with the Sheraton Parkway Toronto North and the Best Western Parkway Toronto North, joined The Hazelton Hotel, The Hilton Toronto Hotel, The Metro Toronto Convention Centre, The InterContinental Toronto Centre, and the Fairmont Royal York Hotel teamed up with George Brown College, and the Ontario Hotel & Restaurant Association (ORHMA) to welcome 20 high school co-op students through their doors.

“The resilience of the industry, our partners, and our incredible co-op students never ceases to amaze me,” says Hani Roustom, CEO of Friday Harbour Resort and program co-founder. “Each year, we witness first-hand how the Be Our Guest program changes the perspectives and career paths of these aspiring hoteliers. Tony Elenis, President and CEO of ORHMA & OHI, adds “travel and tourism are enjoying a revived resurgence, and it has never been more exciting place to work. I welcome and thank the program’s new partners for their believe and support of the program’s purpose and vision”.

Silvio Bin, Cooperative Education Coordinator for the Simcoe County District School Board said “We are grateful for this exciting partnership”. “Programs such as Be Our Guest prepare students for a career in the Hospitality and Tourism sector by providing real-life, hands-on experiences, training, industry exposure and insight. When employers recognize the need to support the learning and growth of students, it’s mutually beneficial. The students gain valuable experience while earning credits towards their secondary school diploma, and employers benefit from opportunities to train and recruit the talent required for their workforce.”



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### **Cultivating the Next Generation of Hospitality Employees**

Since its inception in 2017, this initiative has inspired Canadian hospitality leaders, demonstrating a viable way to engage our youth, introducing hospitality as an exciting career path. In today's current war for talent, engaging in out-of-the-box recruitment and training approaches is more important than ever.

Be Our Guest has changed the course of the lives of over one hundred young high school graduates who may not have discovered their passion for service, hospitality, and travel without this exciting program.

The program continued to engage with students online throughout the COVID-19 pandemic despite restrictions and fulfill co-op placements with participating hotels and operators. We are so happy to have training back in person, and current efforts are in progress to expand the program to other cities across Ontario and beyond in partnership with ORHMA & OHI.

### **About Be Our Guest**

BE OUR GUEST is a cooperative education experiential learning program for secondary school students outside the classroom. The program was founded in 2017 by a group of innovative hospitality leaders with the aim of introducing high school students to the inspiring world of hospitality. BE OUR GUEST operates through the collaboration of Ontario school boards, hospitality organizations and is supported by OHI – We Are Hospitality. The program was launched in Toronto working with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) secondary schools. Currently the Be Our Guest program includes program in three different school boards including North York and South Simcoe District School Board with the intention is to expand the reach and impact of the program through further collaborations.

Hundreds of students are graduates of the BE OUR GUEST program and many have become employed in the numerous career opportunities within the hospitality industry and developed transferrable skills to take them into varied occupations. To learn more, visit [WeAreOHI.ca/BeOurGuest](http://WeAreOHI.ca/BeOurGuest).

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